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ABSTRACT

The impact of the Conservation and Youth Services Corps on communities and program participants was evaluated by studying eight corps programs, which were located in the following areas: Washington State; New York City; Greater Miami, Florida; Santa Clara, California; Boston, Massachusetts; Camden County, New Jersey; Baltimore, Maryland; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Collectively, the 8 programs enrolled 2,382 participants (14% of all participants funded by the Commission on National and Community Service during the study period). Information collected through site visits and surveys of participants, sponsoring/host agencies, and service beneficiaries was used to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the programs and estimate their impacts on participants and the community. The programs' overall net monetary benefit to participants was estimated at $4.03 per service hour, whereas the net costs to the rest of society were estimated at $2.99 per service hour. Nearly 80% of program sponsors rated the quality of services provided by participants as good or excellent, and 69% of the program beneficiaries (including students, disadvantaged populations, senior citizens, and disabled individuals) rated the quality of work performed as good, very good, or excellent. The corps programs were found to have generally positive, albeit somewhat limited, impacts on program participants. (Fifteen tables/figures are included.) (MN)

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Evaluation of National and Community Service Programs

Impacts of Service: Final Report on the Evaluation of American Conservation and Youth Service Corps

August 1, 1996

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A number of our colleagues at Abt Associates provided support for this study. Donna DeMarco and Valerie Leiter assisted in conducting the field research that informed the analysis. Karen Rich managed the processing of information on the Evaluation Information System. Janine Sullivan coordinated the collection of EIS data from the intensive study sites. Ed Peed, Carlos Gandiaga, John McGah and David Kaplan also assisted in the data collection effort. Jan Nicholson, Wendy Davis, and Margie Washington provided secretarial, graphical, and editing support.

Lastly, the Study Leaders for the other components of the evaluation, Larry Bailis and Alan Melchior from the Brandeis Center for Human Resources, and Joe Frees, formerly of Abt Associates, contributed the thoughtfulness and creativity that characterize the collaborative nature of this evaluation.

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SUMMARY

The Conservation and Youth Service Corps programs were funded under Subtitle C of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to create or expand both full-time and summer corps programs for out-of-school youth between the ages of 18-25. Priority was given to programs that "... provide long-term benefits to the public; will instill a work ethic and a sense of public service in participants; will be labor intensive, and involve youth operating in crews; can be planned and initiated promptly; and enhance skill development and education level and opportunities for participants."

This report completes the series of studies of national and community service programs conducted by Abt Associates Inc. and the Brandeis University Center for Human Resources for the Corporation for National Service. The focus of this report is on the participant and community impacts associated with the Subtitle C programs.

Eight of the 100 year-round corps programs receiving Subtitle C funding in the 1993/4 program year were selected as intensive study sites for which program- and participant-level data were collected. This report covers three major analyses: an assessment of the impacts of the programs on their communities was conducted in all eight intensive study sites. The four larger, more mature programs were included in a participant impact analysis, which incorporated a rigorous experimental design; in those programs, applicants were randomly assigned either to a treatment group that was allowed to enter the program, or to a control group that was not, and individual outcomes were estimated over a 15-month period after program entry. A cost-benefit analysis was also conducted in these four study sites. Principal findings are summarized below, organized by type of analysis.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

To determine the net cost or benefit of the programs to different segments of society, the evaluation estimated and compared the monetary benefits and costs associated with the four larger corps. The principal benefit generated by the programs was the value of the services produced; the principal costs were the operational costs of the program, including corpsmember stipends, and the earnings forgone by participants while in the program.

From society's perspective, we find:

- Large, mature corps programs produced a net monetary benefit. For the four programs in this analysis, society gained $1.04 in benefits, over and above costs, for each hour of service.

- In addition to monetary costs and benefits, the programs produced some benefits to participants and the rest of society that could not be measured in monetary terms. For example, program participation reduced the likelihood that youths would be arrested, and reduced the incidence of pregnancy among single African-American women and the drinking of alcoholic beverages among white women.

Community Impacts

A primary goal for corps funded under Subtitle C was to carry out activities "... of a substantial social benefit in meeting unmet human, educational, or environmental needs." For all eight study sites, the evaluation assessed the value of the community services provided, and the extent of satisfaction of service sponsors and beneficiaries, with the following key results:

- During the 14 month period covered by this report,[1] the eight programs contributed over 1 million hours of service, generating an average of 435 hours per participant. Program completers averaged 1,130 hours of service. Nearly all of the service projects were completed for community-based or not-for-profit organizations, government agencies, or educational institutions.

- The value of program output averaged $13.24 per service hour. Collectively, the eight sites generated services worth almost $14 million, during the 14 month reporting period.

- Sponsors of the service projects were highly satisfied with the quality of the service provided. Almost 80 percent of the sponsors rated the quality of corpsmember work as "good" or "excellent." Virtually all of the sponsors (99.6 percent) indicated they would be willing to work with the corps program again.

- Service beneficiaries such as elderly residents of nursing homes and visitors to public parks also attested to the value of the services provided. Nearly three-quarters of the beneficiaries perceived improvement in the quality of life resulting from program services, and over two-thirds rated the quality of services to be "good," "very good," or "excellent."

Participant Impacts

In addition to providing benefits to the community, corps funded under Subtitle C were intended to improve the educational and employment prospects of participants and enhance their personal development. The evaluation estimated participant impacts using an experimental design in the four larger, more mature corps programs. Impact estimates were based on a follow-up period covering approximately 15 months after enrollment.

Impacts were estimated using 41 outcome measures within nine broad areas including education, employment and earnings, and personal and social responsibility. For the participant sample overall, significant program impacts were identified for four of those measures. Compared with control group members over the follow-up period, program participants:

- Were more likely to have worked for pay;

- Worked more hours (including time spent in the corps);

- Were less likely to be arrested;

- Were less likely to earn a technical certificate or diploma.

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[1] The source of data on service hours and participants is the Evaluation Information System (EIS); that reporting system covered the period from July 1, 1993 through August 31, 1994.

Impacts on a number of other outcomes were identified for subgroups of participants, distinguished by gender and ethnicity. There were significant positive employment-related impacts among African-Americans and Hispanics. These results were especially dramatic for African-American males, who also had positive impacts on measures of personal and social responsibility, receipt of an associate's degree, and educational aspirations. Participation in the corps also led to decreased pregnancy among unmarried African-American females.

The only significant impacts on white males were for employment-related outcomes; these tended to be negative. White females fared better, with positive impacts on attainment of an associate's degree, educational expectations, and reduced use of alcohol.

Participants found the corps experience worthwhile:

- Eighty-six percent of the participants reported being either "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with their community service experience. Almost three-quarters said they learned a skill that would be useful to them in the future.

- Participants perceived their service as valuable to the community, with 95 percent rating it "very helpful" or "helpful."

Participants left the program for a wide range of reasons. Only a third indicated they had completed the program; another third left for reasons associated with a negative program experience. Among the remaining third of participants, commonly reported reasons for departure were related to education or employment, and personal or family reasons.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

This report summarizes the results of Abt Associates' impact evaluation of the Youth Conservation and Service Corps funded under Subtitle C of the 1990 National and Community Service Act. Under this Act, the Commission on National and Community Service[1] (CNCS) awarded grants to 200 youth corps across the country. Programs were funded under Subtitle C for "...the creation or expansion of full-time or summer youth corps programs."[2] The Commission was to give priority to programs that: "... provide long-term benefits to the public; will instill a work ethic and sense of public service in the participants; will be labor intensive, and involve youth operating in crews; can be planned and initiated promptly; and enhance skills development and educational level and opportunities for the participants."

This impact evaluation comprises three major studies:

- A cost-benefit analysis
- Estimation of community impacts
- Estimation of participant impacts[3]

Eight youth corps programs, funded by CNCS during the 1993/94 program year, are the focus of the impact evaluation. Information about those programs was collected through on-site visits and through surveys of participants, sponsoring or host agencies, and service beneficiaries. As part of an experimental design implemented for the participant impact analysis in four of the eight sites, information was also collected from individuals randomly assigned to a control group. The Evaluation Information System (EIS), designed to collect information from all CNCS funded programs, provided additional data for this evaluation.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY SITES

The eight corps programs selected as the focus for the evaluation are a subset of the 91 year-round programs, operating in 197 sites, funded by the CNCS during the 1993/94 grant cycle.[4] To the

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[1] Under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, the Commission was merged into the Corporation for National Service.

[2] National and Community Service Act of 1990, Section 121.

[3] A companion document, prepared as part of this evaluation, describes the characteristics of the programs and their participants, and presents the results of the program analysis of the corps.

[4] Summer and part-time corps programs were excluded from the selection process. Abt Associates conducted a separate evaluation of the summer corps programs.

extent feasible, given the limited number of programs that could be included, the study sites are intended to be representative of all corps receiving funding. The eight sites are listed in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1

Eight Corps Selected for Intensive Study

Included in All Analyses	Included in Community Impact Analysis Only
Washington State Service Corps	YouthBuild, Boston
City Volunteer Corps, New York City	Civic Works, Baltimore
Greater Miami Service Corps	New Jersey Youth Corps of Camden County
Santa Clara District, California Conservation Corps	Wisconsin Service Corps, Milwaukee

The eight study sites collectively enrolled 2,382 participants—14 percent of all the participants funded by the CNCS during the fourteen month EIS reporting period, which covered slightly more than one annual funding cycle.[5] The programs also received 18 percent of total CNCS Subtitle C funds awarded during the 1993/94 program year. During the reporting period participants in the eight sites provided over 1 million hours of service, approximately 20 percent of the national total; the programs also leveraged 666 non-participant volunteers, who contributed over 40,000 additional hours of service.

The eight study sites are somewhat larger than most corps programs, both in budgetary terms and overall number of participants. On average, the study sites had half again as many participants as did the typical CNCS funded corps, enrolling an average of 298 participants, compared with an average of 185 participants in corps programs nationwide.

For the most part, characteristics of participants in the study sites are similar to those of corps nationwide.[6] Eight-six percent of the participants in the intensive study sites were persons of color, as indicated in Exhibit 2. Most participants (70 percent) were out-of-school young adults between the ages of 18-25. Fifty-seven percent were males. Most participants were educationally and/or economically disadvantaged: more than half (56 percent) did not have a high school diploma or GED, and 70 percent reported a household income of $15,000 or less in the year prior to entry into the corps.

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[5] EIS reporting covered the period from July 1, 1993 through August 31, 1994.

[6] Appendix A provides detailed information on the characteristics of programs and participants included in the impact analysis, along with parallel information on all corps receiving CNCS funding. Also included in Appendix A is a description of the process used to select the intensive study sites.

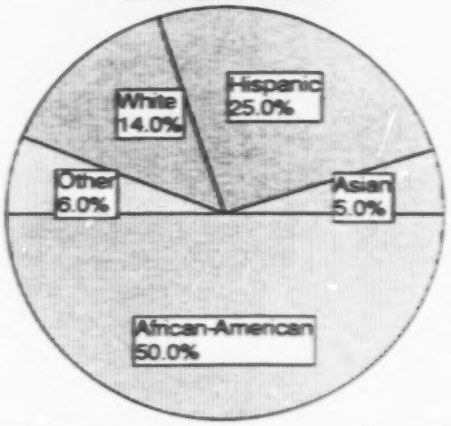
ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The remainder of this report summarizes the results of the evaluation, beginning in Chapter Two with the cost-benefit analysis. In Chapters Three and Four, respectively, we present the community and participant impacts associated with the intensive study programs. Participants' perceptions of the corpsmember experience are also discussed in Chapter Four.

In a separate volume, appendices provide additional details related to the major findings presented in this final report. Appendix A provides information on selection of the intensive sites and a comparison of the characteristics of those sites with corps nationwide. Appendix B details the methodology used for the cost-benefit analysis. Appendix C contains a series of documents related to the community impacts analysis, including data collection forms, methodology and procedures for the estimation of value of output, and a listing of service projects. Appendix D includes copies of the participant baseline and follow-up surveys, a discussion of the analysis sample and impact estimation methodology, as well as baseline characteristics of treatment and control group members, and detailed estimates of participant impacts, including the subgroup analyses.

Exhibit 2

Race/Ethnicity
Intensive Sites



Source: Evaluation Information System Application Form

Sample Size: 2,079

CHAPTER TWO
COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Among the most important questions in the evaluation the Conservation and Youth Service Corps programs funded under Subtitle C is whether the benefits generated by the programs, taken together, are worth the costs of operating the programs. That is, are the programs worthwhile from the standpoint of society as a whole?

APPROACH TO MEASURING BENEFITS AND COSTS

To address this question, we analyze benefits and costs within a social accounting framework, in which all significant benefits and costs are identified and associated with the major groups in society that they affect. In doing so, we recognize that not all program benefits and costs can be measured in monetary terms. The conservation and youth corps programs included in our evaluation had multiple objectives and a broad range of potential effects, such as impacts on participants' sense of social and personal responsibility, which cannot be measured directly in dollars. Wherever possible, we attempt to measure such impacts in nonmonetary terms and record the direction of the qualitative effects on participants or communities. Therefore, we do not attempt to derive a single "bottom line" measure of the overall social value of the programs; rather, we provide an estimate of the net ***monetary*** benefit of the programs to society and consider the potential value of nonmonetary benefits in relation to measured net monetary benefits.

The cost-benefit analysis focuses primarily on the four larger, more established corps programs among the intensive study sites. Those four programs have weathered the transition associated with program startup as they moved toward comparatively stable operations and achieved scale in terms of number of participants. The programs averaged 290 participants each and over 230,000 hours of service during the study period. In contrast, the four smaller sites, not included in the cost-benefit analysis, were still in their implementation stages during the period covered by this evaluation. They averaged only 59 participants and 28,500 service hours. At this point, it was premature to assess their cost-benefit ratio.

In this analysis, all monetary benefits and costs of the programs are expressed as averages per participant service hour. Service hours reflect the total time spent by participants engaged in service activities; this excludes non-service time spent at corps meetings, education, or other corpsmember development activities.

MONETARY BENEFITS AND COSTS OF THE PROGRAMS

In this section, we present estimates of those benefits and costs of the conservation and youth corps programs that can be measured in monetary terms. We then calculate the net monetary benefit of the program—the difference between monetary costs and benefits. The principal benefits of the program that can be monetized are the value of the services it provides to the community and the returns to additional education received by corpsmembers. The principal costs of the programs that can be measured in monetary terms are the wages and benefits paid to participants, the other operational costs of the program, and any earnings forgone by participants while they are in the program.

Monetary Benefits

A central objective of the programs funded under the National Community Service Act was to generate services that benefit the community. The ***value of program output*** is difficult to determine, however, because the output does not have a simple market price. For the cost-benefit analysis, we rely upon estimates of the value of services provided. These estimates are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of this report, which focuses on community impacts. Based on the analysis presented there, we estimate the value of program output to be $13.63 per service hour for the four larger corps programs.

In addition to providing service to the community, a second fundamental objective of the programs is to encourage participants to return to school after they leave the program, through in-program educational activities and post-service educational benefits. Direct measurement of the extent to which this goal was realized and/or the benefits of any additional education attributable to program participation would have required longer-term followup than was possible within the scope of this evaluation. Therefore, to estimate the ***returns to additional education***, we applied an estimate of the rate of return to investment in post-program education obtained from other studies to the post-service education benefits received by participants. Our estimate of this benefit is $.19 per service hour.

Monetary Costs

Operational costs of each program are measured in expenditure data for the 1993/94 program year, which corresponds to the period covered by the service projects in our value of output sample. In addition, the Corporation for National Service provided national level data on the costs of administering the programs during this period.[7]

At the local program level, the principal operational costs of the programs are the ***wages, stipends, and benefits*** provided to participants and the ***other operational costs*** of the program, such as the costs of paid program staff, overhead, and other expenses. Note that participant stipends, fringe benefits, and post-program benefits involve an offsetting benefit to participants. In computing net monetary costs of the programs, therefore, it is important to measure these "transfers" separately. Because our estimate of the value of program output reflects all inputs to the program, we have measured all program operational costs, regardless of funding sources, and those devoted to non-service activities (such as education and training) as well as direct service.

The cost of participant stipends, fringes, and post-program benefits was $6.76 per service hour. Other operational costs of the programs at the state and local level averaged $9.66 per service hour, and administrative costs at the national level averaged $.20 per service hour.

The third major social cost of the programs was the earnings in regular employment that were forgone by corpsmembers while they were in the program. ***Forgone earnings*** averaged $2.92 per service hour. (From the corpsmembers' perspective, this loss of regular earnings was more than compensated by the receipt of $6.76 per service hour in wages and stipends from the program.)[8]

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[7] These data were not available when this report was completed. Therefore, we calculated a provisional estimate of these costs on the basics of data provided earlier for the programs funded under Subtitle D.

[8] Appendix B describes the estimation of forgone earnings in more detail.

Exhibit 3

BENEFITS AND COSTS PER SERVICE HOUR

Type of Benefit or Cost	Benefit (+) or Cost(-) to:		
	Participants (Column 1)	Rest of Society (Column 2)	Society (Column 3)
Monetary Benefits and Costs:			
Operational costs of program (net of stipends, fringes, and post-program benefits)	0	-$9.66	-$9.66
Participant stipends, fringes, and post-service benefits	+$6.76	-$6.76	0
CNCS costs	0	-$.20	-$.20
Forgone earnings	-$2.92	0	-$2.92
Value of program output	0	+$13.63	+$13.63
Returns to additional education	+$.19	0	+$.19
Net monetary benefits:	+$4.03	-$2.99	+$1.04
Nonmonetary Benefits:			
Impacts on participant civic, social, and personal development	0	0	0
Reduced risk behavior[a]	+	+	+
Strengthened collaborations and community networks and other indirect benefits to community	ne	ne	ne

SOURCE: EIS forms, interviews with host agency staff in a statistically representative sample of projects, expenditure data provided by program staff, and followup surveys with treatment and control group members. See Appendix C for estimation methodology.

[a] Indicated by statistically significant reduction in the proportion of individuals ever arrested as reported at follow-up.

ne = not estimated

Net Monetary Value of Programs to Society

Exhibit 3 summarizes the program's benefits and costs. The top panel of the exhibit shows estimated monetary benefits and costs per service hour; benefits are shown as positive numbers, costs as negative numbers. Monetary benefits minus monetary costs are the estimated net monetary benefit of the programs. The bottom panel of the exhibit indicates whether the nonmonetary impacts were positive (+), negative (−), zero (0), or not estimated (ne). Benefits and costs are shown from each of three perspectives: participants (column 1), the rest of society (column 2), including taxpayers who supported the program financially and the communities where the programs operated that benefitted from the services provided, and society as a whole (column 3). The effects on society are the sum of benefits and costs to participants and to the rest of the community.

In purely monetary terms, Exhibit 3 (columns 1-3) indicates that the four established programs represent a valuable investment of public funds. On average, they produced $1.04 in net monetary

benefits to society for every hour of service participation. Moreover, this figure does not include the value of nonmonetary benefits that are discussed at the end of the chapter.

Monetary Costs and Benefits in the Other Intensive Sites

As mentioned earlier, we did not conduct a full cost-benefit analysis of the four newer, smaller corps programs included in the intensive analysis. Given their implementation status, we viewed it as premature to conduct a complete analysis at this time. However, we did estimate the value of output and operating costs of those programs. The value of output for those programs averaged $10.67 per service hour, about three dollars less per hour than for the larger, more mature programs. In general, the smaller programs focused more on educational and human service projects which tended to have a lower value of output than projects requiring more physical labor.

Compared with the larger corps, the four smaller programs had a comparatively higher operating cost. At $19.40 per service hour the costs were double that of the more mature programs. Because of the relatively small number of participants in the newer programs, the fixed costs associated with program operation were allocated across fewer service hours. In addition, the smaller programs also provided more extensive participant development services than the larger programs. Those costs were also included in the programs' operating costs. Presumably, once the newer programs reach a steady operational state and scale, in terms of number of participants, the operating costs per service hour will decrease.

Other Measures of Program Benefits

In addition to the estimates of monetary benefits and costs, the evaluation also generated several additional measures of benefits to participants. The evaluation examined participant impacts on 41 outcomes in nine broad categories, including education, employment and earnings, and civic, social and personal development. As will be discussed in more detail later in this report, for the participant sample overall, four significant program impacts were identified. One impact that is potentially important but difficult to quantify in monetary terms, is the decrease in risk behavior, as evidenced by a reduction in arrest rates. Positive impacts were also identified for several subgroups of participants, particularly African-Americans and Hispanics. Positive impacts on employment-related measures as well as measures of personal and social responsibility and educational aspirations were estimated for these groups.

These impacts will have direct and indirect effects on both individual participants and society at large. Although estimation of the monetary value of these effects was not possible, it is likely that their value would not be trivial. It should also be noted that there are possible long-term benefits to both the participants and the community that we were unable to measure in this evaluation because of its limited follow-up period. These benefits add to the estimated net monetary benefit to society, which is already positive.

CHAPTER THREE
COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Conservation and youth service corps receiving funding under Subtitle C were expected to conduct activities focusing on conservation or human services, and any other activity determined to be "... of a substantial social benefit in meeting unmet human, educational, or environmental needs (particularly needs related to poverty) in the community where volunteer service is to be performed."[9] The concept of community impacts is a broad one, and not easily measured in a limited study, particularly given the wide range of types of services provided by corps included in this evaluation.

The following four measures are used to assess impacts of the corps on their communities:

- hours of service and characteristics of service projects;
- documentation of project accomplishments;
- service quality, as assessed by beneficiaries and host agencies; and
- value of program services.

All eight intensive study sites are included in this analysis of community impacts. Key findings from the four measures of community impact are summarized in the first four sections below. We conclude this chapter with a brief discussion identifying other potential community benefits associated with the program, but not measurable within the scope of this evaluation.

SERVICE HOURS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SERVICE PROJECTS

Evaluation Information System (EIS) data were used to estimate total hours of service within five basic types of service activities (i.e., human service, education, public safety, environment, and other service). The results of this analysis indicate that during the 14 month reporting period:

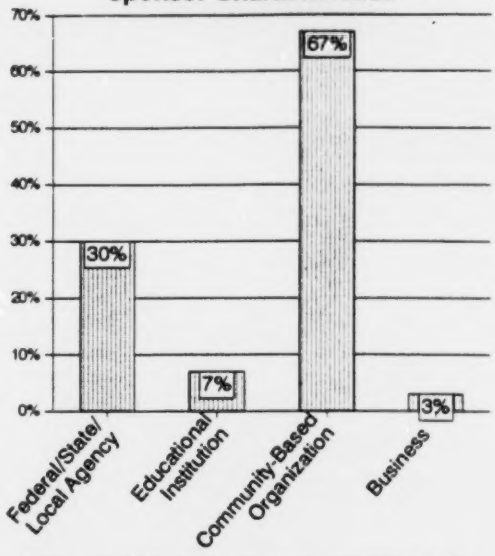
- The eight intensive study programs contributed over 1 million hours of service, generating an average of 435 hours per participant. Particpants successfully completing the program averaged 1,130 hours of service.
- The service projects were generally short-term initiatives. Almost two-thirds of the service projects lasted between 2 and 12 weeks, with 41 percent lasting between 2 and 4 weeks.
- Almost all of the projects were accomplished by corpsmembers organized in teams or crews (87 percent), rather than individual activities.
- Nearly 70 percent of the service projects were conducted for community-based, or not-for-profit organizations. As shown in Exhibit 4, government agencies at the federal, state, or local levels sponsored 30 percent of the projects. Seven percent of the projects were

[9] National and Community Service Act of 1992, section 124.

conducted for educational institutions; only 3 percent of the projects were sponsored by private businesses.[10]

- Provision of human services was the most common focus for service projects, representing over a third of all service hours, as illustrated in Exhibit 5. Environmental and education-related projects each accounted for about a fifth of all service hours.

Exhibit 4
Service Projects by Sponsor Characteristics



Source: Evaluation Information System (EIS) Project Description form.
Sample Size: 86 projects

Documentation of Project Accomplishments

Information about project accomplishments was collected for a representative subset of projects in the intensive sites. The projects resulted in a wide range of accomplishments, as indicated by the examples in Exhibit 6. Appendix C provides a complete listing of accomplishments in the representative sample of projects.

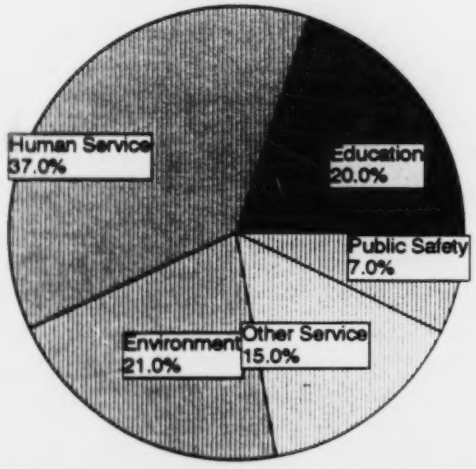
Service Quality

To assess the quality of services provided by corpsmembers, interviews were conducted with selected service beneficiaries and the staff of agencies sponsoring, or serving as host agency for, service projects.

The analysis indicated that the corps provided net increases in the services available in their community, in most cases accomplishing work that would not have been done in their

Exhibit 5

Participant Service Hours - By Type of Service



Source: Evaluation Information System (EIS) Project Description forms, adjusted for nonresponse.
Sample Size: 15 of 21 operating sites in 8 intensive study programs reporting.

[10] Percentages exceed 100 because some projects have multiple sponsors.

Exhibit 6
EXAMPLES OF PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- In collaboration with a neighborhood school-based community center, a team of corpsmembers served as teacher assistants, tutoring children (K-3) individually or in groups of 2-6 or reading to students. Each team member was assigned to a classroom with 20-25 children.
- Corpsmembers provided tutoring to 400 students enrolled in an after-school tutoring program operated by a community-based organization.
- At a local health care facility, corpsmembers prepared and mailed materials for the volunteer services director, helped maintain stocks in hospital supply rooms, escorted patients to examinations, and assisted with the provision of child care at an on-site facility (for employees). Corps members provided services to 65-85 children, ranging in age from 2 months to 5 years.
- Corpsmembers assisted in staging an Olympics-style athletic event for an estimated 400 physically challenged children. Corpsmembers helped in the preparation for the event, timed activities, and assisted children in the track and field and swimming meets. They also cleaned up after the event.
- For a local conservation center, corpsmembers planted 400 trees along a highway as a soundbreak.
- For the corps program, participants began the rehabilitation of a 5-story, 6000 sq. ft. building intended for use as housing for 14 future participants. Services provided included demolition, excavation, masonry, window installation, rough-framing, installing structural steel, concrete finishing, site work, roofing, siding.
- Following a devastating hurricane, corpsmembers removed debris and did exterior clean-up for approximately 20 duplexes in a public housing project.
- As part of park improvement project operated by a local parks department, corpsmembers cleared brush from a 10-foot wide trail. They also cleared stairs on the trail, and reconstructed 25 4-foot wide × 10-inch deep stairs on a hillside that can now be traversed safely. For the same set of trails, corpsmembers also constructed 2 6-foot retaining walls from railroad ties.

Source: Evaluation Information System, Project Accomplishment Form

absence, as indicated in Exhibit 7.[11] Where respondents reported that only "some" of the work would have been accomplished without the program, the sponsor typically had access to requisite supplies but only some, if any, of the labor needed to complete the project. Although one in five sponsors indicated that the work would have been completed anyway, many qualified their responses with such statements as "eventually," or "using overtime of our staff."

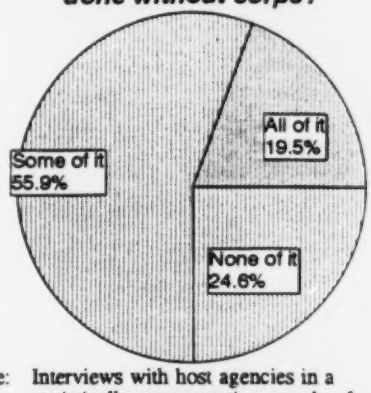
[11] The methodology for collecting information from sponsoring agencies and program beneficiaries is presented in Appendix C, along with the methodology and procedures for the estimation of value of output discussed below.

Project sponsors expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the quality of services provided by participants. As indicated by the three measures of sponsor satisfaction presented in Exhibit 8:

- Almost 80 percent of the sponsoring agencies rated the quality of corpsmember work as "good" or "excellent."
- The overall average rating on a 10-point scale was 7.6; projects with a public safety or human needs focus received the highest ratings.
- Virtually all of the agencies (99.6 percent) indicated they would be willing to work with the corps program again.

Exhibit 7

Would work have gotten done without corps?



Source: Interviews with host agencies in a statistically representative sample of projects in the intensive evaluation sites that were active during the period July 1, 1993 to May 31, 1994.

Sample Size: 95 projects. (Projects weighted by participant hours.)

Service beneficiaries included students and other young people, disadvantaged populations, senior citizens, people with disabilities, and the community at large. In general, the beneficiaries surveyed were satisfied with the services provided by the corps. As indicated in Exhibit 9:

- Sixty-nine percent of the beneficiaries rated the quality of the work performed to be "good," "very good," or "excellent."
- Nearly three-quarters of the beneficiaries indicated the quality of their lives had been improved by the services provided.[12]

Value of Program Services

The final measure of community impact is an assessment of the value of services generated by the programs. The value of the output of such programs is difficult to estimate. In private markets, the value of goods and services is determined by the price consumers are willing to pay for them. Because program outputs generated by the corps are not sold in any market, an alternative way of assessing their value had to be applied. The valuation method selected as most appropriate for this study is the estimated supply price of the output.

The supply price of output is an estimate of what it would cost a private supplier to produce the same output using regular, unsubsidized labor. This cost is estimated by calculating the market value of

[12] Most of the beneficiaries who reported they experienced a decrease in the quality of lives came from a single service project that involved painting the interior of an occupied office building. In addition to dissatisfaction with the quality of the work provided, the project also inconvenienced the intended beneficiaries.

Exhibit 8

HOST AGENCY ASSESSMENTS OF WORK QUALITY, INTENSIVE STUDY SITES

Percent rating overall program quality:	
Excellent	24%
Good	54
Fair	22
Poor	0
Average rating on 10-point scale:	
Education	7.6
Human needs	8.0
Education and human needs	7.0
Public safety	8.3
Environment	7.5
Community improvements	7.9
Other	7.4
All projects	7.6
Agency would work with program again:	99.6%

SOURCE: Interviews with host agencies in a statistically representative sample of projects in the intensive evaluation sites that were active during the period July 1, 1993 to May 31, 1994.

Sample size: 95 projects. (Projects weighted by participant hours.)

Exhibit 9

SERVICE BENEFICIARIES' ASSESSMENTS OF WORK QUALITY, INTENSIVE STUDY SITES

Percent rating quality of work:	
Excellent	22%
Very good	30%
Good	17%
Some problems	16%
Poor	15%
Perceived effect of services on quality of beneficiaries' lives:	
Greatly increased	32%
Some improvement	40%
No change	19%
Some decrease	5%
Greatly decreased	4%

SOURCE: Ratings provided by service beneficiaries in a non-statistical sample of projects in the intensive evaluation sites.

Sample size: 134 beneficiaries.

the inputs used to produce the programs' output. Such inputs include: participants' labor, including fringe benefits, supervision costs, materials and supplies, administration and overhead that a private firm would incur, and the value of non-participant volunteer labor. The supply price of output includes the value of contributions made to the project by individuals or organizations not associated with the corps program.

Estimates of the value of program input were developed for a representative sample of projects. Valuation was based on the sponsoring agency's estimates of the cost of comparable labor in the local area and the productivity of program participants relative to regular workers.[13]

Exhibit 10

VALUE OF PROGRAM OUTPUT PER SERVICE HOUR

Average hourly value of:	
Participant labor	$ 7.58
Fringe benefits	2.22
Supervision	.89
Materials and supplies	.06
Administration and overhead	2.14
Non-participant volunteer labor	.35
Total value per hour	$13.24

SOURCE: Surveys of host agencies in a statistically representative sample of projects active during the period July 1, 1993 to May 31, 1994.

Sample size: 88 projects.

The resulting estimates of the value of program output per service hour, across all eight intensive study sites, is $13.24, comprised of the elements presented in Exhibit 10. At the individual program level the value per service hour ranged from $8.64 to $15.18. Participant labor accounted for over half of the estimated value (57 percent). Applying the $13.24 estimate of the value of a service hour, the programs included in our analysis generated services worth nearly $14,000,000 during the 14 month reporting period covered by the evaluation.

Other Community Benefits

As mentioned earlier, the programs may have generated some additional community benefits not measurable within the scope of this evaluation. These additional benefits may include both indirect benefits to the community associated with the program and longer-term benefits that extend beyond the timeframe of the study. They are noted here because they represent a potential additional source of benefits to the community. For example, although not an immediate goal for a corps program, exposure to program participants may have led some community residents to develop a more positive perception of young people in general, or of young people from different ethnic backgrounds.

Another potential benefit is associated with the development of linkages across community agencies and organizations. During visits to the intensive study sites, we observed promising new and expanded relationships and partnerships between the corps programs and other community organizations. The timeframe for the evaluation precluded an examination of any long term institutional changes; however, it is quite possible that some of these interorganizational partnerships extended beyond the

[13] Additional information about the procedure used to estimate the supply price of output, including sampling methodology and survey instruments, is located in Appendix C.

single CNCS funding cycle. Thus, the capacity for community organizations to serve community members and to collaborate across organizations may be enhanced or expanded because of their association with the corps.

Finally, we observed numerous examples of potential indirect or long-term impacts of service projects accomplished by the study sites. Some examples are presented in Exhibit 11.

Exhibit 11
EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL LONG-TERM COMMUNITY IMPACTS

- Increased use of routine preventive medical examinations due to corps' recruitment of community members for the local health clinic
- Increased participation in community recycling and/or conservation efforts due to outreach efforts by the corpsmembers
- Enhanced recognition of the importance of the environment as a result of the use of trails or parks developed by corpsmembers

In this chapter, we have described the impact of youth corps on their communities. Impacts of the corps programs on their participants will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR
PARTICIPANT IMPACTS

The objectives incorporated in the 1990 National and Community Service Act included three related to corps programs' impacts on participants. Those objectives were to:

- Renew the ethic of civic responsibility in the United States;
- Encourage citizens, regardless of age or income, to engage in service; and
- Involve youth in programs that benefit the nation and improve their own lives.

Programs were also required to "make academic study available to participants to enable such participants to upgrade literacy skills, to obtain high school diplomas, or the equivalent of such diplomas, to obtain college degrees, or to enhance employable skills."

To address these objectives, conservation and youth service corps provide a wide range of services designed to enhance participants' personal development, promote additional education, and increase future employability. Strategies used by the programs combined both contextually based "hands-on" learning and traditional classroom education.

In collaboration with corps programs, Abt Associates identified 41 outcome measures in nine broad categories where the corps experience had the potential for influencing participant attitudes and behavior. Those categories are listed on the right. The 41 outcome measures used to assess participant impacts are listed in Appendix D.

Categories of Outcomes

Civic, social and personal development
Current and planned community service
Current or planned involvement in other social service
Voting behavior
Education and training achievements and plans
Employment and earnings
Involvement with risk behavior
Educational aspirations and expectations
Work performance

APPROACH TO MEASURING PARTICIPANT IMPACTS

To assess the impact of the corps on participants, an experimental design was implemented in four of the intensive study sites. The selected programs were the larger, more mature corps. In those sites, program applicants were randomly assigned to a treatment group that was allowed to enroll in the program or a control group that was not. Baseline interviews were administered to members of both groups at the time of program application, providing personal demographic and other information. Following random assignment, individuals in the treatment group were enrolled in the corps, whereas control group members were excluded from participation in the program for one year. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with treatment and control group members approximately 15 months after random assignment. Program impacts were estimated by comparing the outcomes of treatment group members to those of the control group, the latter representing what would have happened to the

treatment group in the absence of the program. The experimental design of the analysis ensures that there are no systematic differences between the two groups at baseline; therefore differences between the two groups at follow-up can be directly attributed to participation in the corps.

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of participant impacts overall and for key subgroups. In addition, we discuss corpsmembers' perceptions of the service experience. Appendix D includes detailed displays of the results of the impact analyses.

PARTICIPANT IMPACTS

Overall, the most significant impacts were related to employment and earnings. During the follow-up period, treatment group members:

- ***Were more likely than control group members to have worked for pay.*** The program increased employment by 26 percentage points, from 73 percent to almost 99 percent.

- ***Worked more hours.*** On average, participants worked almost 40 percent more hours over the follow-up period than their counterparts in the control group (over 2,030 hours on average among participants, compared with 1,465 for controls).

Much of the positive employment-related impact is attributable to work while in the corps. The $83 estimated increase in corpsmembers' monthly earnings is composed of a positive $197 associated with earnings while in the corps and a $114 reduction in regular earnings while they were in the corps.

Other statistically significant impacts indicate that program participants were:

- ***Less likely to be arrested.*** Participation in the programs reduced arrest rates prior to the follow-up interview by nearly one-third (12 percent of the treatment group vs. 17 percent of the controls).

- ***Less likely to earn a technical certificate or diploma.*** Only 8 percent of all participants earned certificates or diplomas from technical schools during the follow-up period as compared with 13 percent of the controls. Apparently participation in the corps served as a substitute for enrollment in additional education, at least in the short run.

Overall, the impacts of the corps are positive, especially when considered in light of the fact that recent evaluations of other programs targeting disadvantaged youth have yielded at best mixed results.[14] Many of the young people participating in corps have a wide range of significant barriers to overcome that even the most developed corps programs do not have the capacity to address.

While significant impacts were identified for only four outcome measures, most other measures showed positive, but not statistically significant, effects of participation in the corps. This suggests that the programs have generally positive, if not robust, effects on participants. Although the

[14] For example, the national evaluation of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) program, the major federal training program for disadvantaged adults and young people, found no statistically significant positive impacts on earnings for out-of-school youth. See "What's Working (and what's not): A Summary of Research on the Economic Impacts of Employment and Training Programs." U.S. Department of Labor, January 1995.

four programs differ somewhat in their emphases and participant characteristics, there was little variation in impacts across programs.

The evaluation also estimated impacts on subgroups of the corpsmember population. That analysis is presented in the next section.

IMPACTS ON SUBGROUPS

The diversity of participants in the corps suggests that impacts may vary across different subgroups of participants. The evaluation estimated impacts separately for categories of participants defined by gender, ethnicity, age, high school graduation status at program application, and duration in program. We found ***no significant differences in the impacts associated with the age of participants or whether they had completed high school***. ***We also did not detect any differences in impacts based on length of stay in the program,*** *once adjustments were made for differences in participant characteristics*. Because preliminary analyses indicated differences in impacts based on both gender and ethnicity, we examined impacts by gender for each major ethnic group.

The most dramatic positive impacts were on African-American males. Compared with control group members, African-American males in the treatment group:

- ***Scored significantly higher on measures of personal and social responsibility.*** Members of the treatment group had scores at follow-up that averaged nearly 8 percent above controls on the community involvement subscale, and over 6 percent above controls on the overall Personal and Social Responsibility scale.

- ***Were more likely to have voted in the last election***. Participants were more than four times as likely to have voted than their counterparts in the control group (22 percent of participants had voted, compared with only 4 percent of controls).

- ***Experienced more employment and had higher earnings***. Treatment group members were almost half again as likely as control group members to have worked for pay during the follow-up period (91 percent vs. 62 percent), and both the total hours worked and average monthly earnings were over one and a half times as large in the treatment group compared with controls (participants worked over 1,810 total hours on average and had monthly earnings that averaged $705). It must be noted, of course, that these impacts include work as corpsmembers.

- ***Were more likely to have earned an associate's degree***. Nearly 4 percent of African-American males in the treatment group earned an associate's degree, while none of the control group earned the degree.

- ***Were more likely to have changes in educational aspirations***. Almost two-thirds of the treatment group indicated they would like to graduate from college, compared to less than 40 percent in the control group.

- ***Were less likely to report a good relationship with people at work besides their supervisor.*** For those employed at time of follow-up, only 80 percent indicated they had very good or pretty good relationships with co-workers, compared with 95 percent of the controls. This may simply mean that participants had higher standards for workplace relationships based on the supportive relationships they encountered with their fellow corpsmembers.

The strong impacts on African-American males are especially important given findings from previous studies indicating that few employment or training programs have any effects for disadvantaged young persons of color, especially males.[15]

Hispanic males also experienced positive impacts from corps involvement, on:

- ***Total hours worked since program enrollment***. Participants worked nearly 900 hours more than their control group counterparts, who worked 1,450 hours.

- ***The receipt of a promotion at the current job***. Over a third of the participants received a promotion, as compared with 19 percent of the controls.

In contrast, we found ***negative impacts on employment outcomes for white males***. Compared to white males in the control group, members of the treatment group:

- ***Were less likely to be employed at follow-up***. About two-thirds as many treatment group members as control group members were employed at follow-up (59 percent vs. nearly 90 percent).[16]

- ***Had lower monthly earnings***. Participants' monthly earnings (including months with no earnings) averaged $875 over the follow-up period, whereas the control group averaged $1238. However, both groups of white males earned considerably more than their counterparts in other subgroups.

- ***Scored lower on the measure of perceived control of work outcomes***. Treatment group members had scores that were 8 percent below the scores of control group members, on average.

Impacts on female participants were generally positive, but more limited than for males. ***African-American*** females in the treatment group were:

- ***More likely than control group members to have worked for pay during the follow-up period***. Almost 90 percent of the participants had worked since program enrollment, as compared with just over 60 percent of controls.

- ***More likely than controls to have received an award at their current job***. Of those currently working, nearly 35 percent of treatment group members had received an award at their job, as compared with only 9 percent of the controls.

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[15] *Dilemmas in Youth Employment Programming: Findings from the Youth Research and Technical Assistance Project*. U.S. Department of Labor, 1992.

[16] This disparity is not explained by higher rates of school enrollment among participants. At follow-up, 22 percent of participants were attending school, as compared with 19 percent of controls.

- ***Less likely than members of the control group to be unmarried and pregnant at follow-up*** (6 percent of the treatment group vs. 21 percent of controls).[17]

Hispanic females in the treatment group:

- ***Were much more likely than control group members to have worked for pay since program enrollment*** (91 percent of the treatment group vs. 53 percent of the controls).
- ***Were more likely to have higher educational aspirations.*** Nearly two-thirds indicated they would like to graduate from a 4-year college or attend graduate school, compared to 61 percent of controls.
- ***Were less likely to receive a raise at their current job*** (no treatment group members compared with 40 percent of controls). It should be noted, however, that at follow-up, participants may not have been in their post-corps job sufficient time to be eligible for a raise.

Correspondingly, white females were:

- ***More likely to have earned an associate's degree than controls***. Over a quarter of participants earned the degree, compared with no controls. At random assignment white females were more likely to already have a GED or high school diploma than individuals in other subgroups, so their attainment of an associate's degree during the follow-up period may have been more feasible.
- ***More likely to expect to graduate from a 4-year college or attend graduate school than control group members*** (90 percent of treatment group members compared with less than 60 percent of controls).
- ***Much less likely than control group members to have consumed five or more alcoholic drinks in one sitting during the previous month*** (3 percent vs 32 percent).

What accounts for the differences in outcomes across subgroups, in particular the negative impacts for white males? The positive impacts on employment for African-Americans and Hispanics may reflect the difficult job market situation encountered by many young people of color. The corps appear to provide a critical source of employment and earnings for non-white participants. In contrast, white females seem to do equally well both inside and outside of the corps in terms of employment and earnings. On the other hand, higher-paying employment opportunities appear to be more accessible to young white males outside the corps.

Satisfaction with Service Experience

A final perspective on the effectiveness of the conservation and youth service corps programs is participant satisfaction with the corps experience. As part of the follow-up interview, program participants were asked a series of questions designed to assess their impressions of the program.

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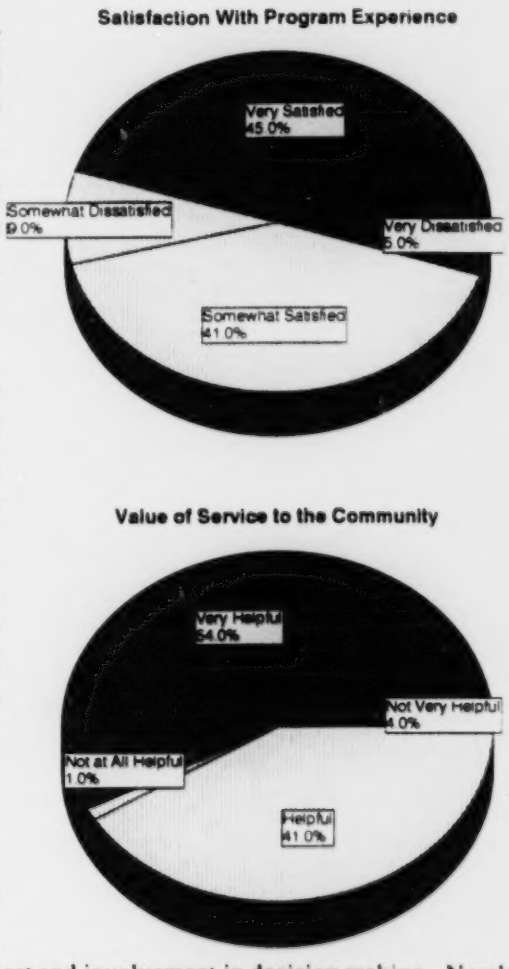
[17] The impact estimate explicitly accounts for variations in the marital status of participants and is not associated with a decline in the marriage rate of African-American females.

Overall, participants were highly satisfied with their program experience. The top graph of Exhibit 12 shows that 86 percent of the participants reported they were satisfied with the experience; almost half of those reported that they were very satisfied. Satisfaction with the overall program experience holds true even for participants involuntarily terminated from the program--of those individuals, 30% indicated they were "very satisfied" with their corps experience and 51% were "somewhat satisfied." In addition, almost three-quarters (73 percent) of all participants said they learned a skill that would be useful to them in the future.

Exhibit 12



Participants perceived their service as valuable to the community. In rating the impact of their services, 95 percent rated their service as being very helpful or helpful to their community, as indicated in the lower panel of Exhibit 12.

Participants considered the service experience to be a positive investment of their time. Over 80 percent of the participants indicated they would enroll again, if they had the opportunity to make the decision again. ***Almost two-thirds (64 percent) would recommend the program highly to a friend.***

Participants also reported satisfaction with the corps operating rules and staff, as illustrated in Exhibit 13. Corps programs maintain structured rules and guidelines to reinforce work skills and responsibility, while promoting corpsmember development through respect and involvement in decision making. Nearly 90 percent of the corpsmembers viewed the programs as having reasonable expectations, and nearly three quarters thought the rules and policies were fair. Corpsmembers also rated program staff highly in terms of their respect for corpsmembers and willingness to listen.

Corps also promote corpsmember social and personal development through teamwork and access to caring adults as role models and mentors. ***Ninety percent of the participants reported developing at least one very good personal relationship during their corps experience.*** Exhibit 14 shows that the most common close relationships were developed with other corpsmembers, crew or team leaders, or another adult in the program.

A final indicator of participant satisfaction is the extent to which they completed the program. Exhibit 15 summarizes participants' reasons for leaving the corps. ***Corpsmembers left the program for***

Exhibit 13

PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Perception	Percent
Corps had reasonable expectations for members	89.2
Rules and policies clear	81.9
Rules and policies fair	73.9
Promotion and review policies clear	74.0
Staff listened to corps members	76.3
Corps members respected by staff	81.5
Corps members had input into type of work done	77.2

Exhibit 14

PARTICIPANTS' DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

	Percent
Developed a very good relationship with:	
Crew or team leader	65.0
Another adult working in the program	44.6
Another corps member	84.4
A service beneficiary	38.5
Did not develop any very good relationships	8.7

Exhibit 15

PARTICIPANTS' REASONS FOR LEAVING CORPS

Reason	Percent
Graduated/finished program	33.3
Dissatisfied with program	13.6
Fired/kicked out	14.8
Problems/arguments/fights with staff	6.3
Left to get/found another job	9.1
Educational reasons	3.1
Personal reasons/family problems	13.8
Other	6.0

a variety of reasons. Only about a third indicated they had completed the program.[18] This figure is consistent with the 30 percent who reported they were eligible to receive a post-service tuition or financial benefit. Another third left for reasons associated with a negative experience—either they were dissatisfied with some aspect of the program (stipend amount, location, difficulty of service project), had a disagreement with staff, or were involuntarily terminated. The rest of the reasons cited were evenly split between leaving for employment or education reasons and personal problems, including pregnancy and medical problems.

CONCLUSION

The corps programs had generally positive, but somewhat limited, impacts on program participants. The most consistent significant impacts were related to employment and earnings while participants were in the corps. However, the overall impacts masked important differences across subgroups defined by participant ethnicity and gender. The program has the most positive impacts on African-American males and affected a wide range of outcomes; impacts on African-American females and Hispanics were also positive. In addition to the impacts identified, most participants reported that they viewed their corps experience positively.

This evaluation was conducted at a point at which many participants were making the transition from the corps into their next experience in employment and/or education. Although the findings are promising, additional research will be needed to assess whether the effects of the program are sustained in the long term.

[18] This is somewhat lower than the figure reported by the programs; programs differ in their definition of a "successful completion." Some programs categorize corpsmembers who leave the program early to return to school or to get another job as "successful completers."